

## Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 SY-05

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SUBJ: NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING: FOURTH DAY PRODUCES FEW LEADS

ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS

REF: CARACAS 2421

SUMMARY. THE GOV MADE LITTLE CONCRETE PROGRESS MARCH 1 IN LOCATING NIEHOUS OTHER THAN DISCOVERING A VEHICLE IN WHICH NIEHOUS MAY HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED. THE NIEHOUS FAMILY ASKED THE KIDNAPPERS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM. SOME 100 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING AND FOUR OF NIEHOUS' ABDUCTORS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN IDENTIFIED. END SUMMARY.

1. MARCH 1, THE FOURTH DAY SINCE THE KIDNAPPING OF U.S. INDUSTRIALIST WILLIAM NIEHOUS ON FEBRUARY 27, PASSED WITH NO FURTHER AUTHORITATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FROM NIEHOUS' ABDUCTORS AND LITTLE CONCRETE PROGRESS IN LOCATING NIEHOUS BY THE GOV INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (DISIP). INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE STATED AT 2 P.M., MARCH 1 THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD NO SOLID CLUES LEADING TO A BREAK IN THE CASE OR DETERMINING THE IDENTITY OF THE KIDNAPPERS. LEPAGE SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO CONTACT BETWEEN THE KIDNAPPERS AND THE NIEHOUS FAMILY OR OWENS-ILLINOIS. HE AFFIRMED UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT THE MASSIVE SECURITY OPERATION WHICH BEGAN THE NIGHT OF THE

ABDUCTION WAS CONTINUING.

2. THE DISCOVERY IN MARACAY, SOME 70 MILES WEST OF CARACAS, IN THE EARLY HOURS OF MARCH 1 OF A CHEVROLET SEDAN ALLEGEDLY USED TO TRANSPORT NIEHOUS RAISED HOPES THAT THE VEHICLE MIGHT PRODUCE A SIGNIFICANT LEAD. HOWEVER, LEPAGE POINTED OUT THAT NIEHOUS' ABDUCTORS MIGHT HAVE DISCARDED THE VEHICLE IN MARACAY IN AN ATTEMPT TO THROW THE POLICE OFF THE TRACK. FOUND IN THE VEHICLE WERE A SHIRT AND A PAIR OF PANTS SUPPOSEDLY BELONGING TO NIEHOUS, HIS CHECKBOOK, A SYRINGE, AND AN AMPOULE OF THE SEDATIVE "LARGACTIL" PRESUMABLY USED TO DRUG NIEHOUS AT THE TIME OF THE KIDNAPPING. AN OFFICIAL OF THE JUDICIAL POLICE (PTJ) LATER TOLD THE PRESS THAT MRS. NIEHOUS DID NOT KNOW IF THE ARTICLES OF CLOTHING WERE HER HUSBAND'S. THE VEHICLE RECOVERED BY THE POLICE WAS STOLEN IN NOVEMBER 1975 IN CARACAS. THIS FUELED PRESS SPECULATION THAT THE NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING WAS ORIGINALLY PLANNED FOR DECEMBER 13 BUT POSTPONED FOR SOME REASONS. DECEMBER 13 WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF GUERRILLA LEADER ARGIMIRO GABALDON, WHOSE NAME HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE KIDNAPPING OPERATION BY THE GROUP RESPONSIBLE, IN 1864 IN LARA STATE.

3. THE POLICE SPENT MARCH 1 CHECKING OUT A NUMBER OF FALSE LEADS WHEN PERSONS CLAIMING TO BE NIEHOUS' KIDNAPPERS TELEPHONED THE NIEHOUS HOME, OTHER OWENS-ILLINOIS EXECUTIVES, RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS, AND NEWSPAPERS. AS A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE TRU KIDNAPPERS, OWNES-ILLINOIS' LOCAL FINANCIAL MANAGER APPEALED PUBLICLY FOR THE KIDNAPPERS "TO MAKE CONTACT WITH US FOR THE FIRST TIME OR AGAIN, IF THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE SO, AND SEND PROOF WHICH WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH THE REAL GROUP." AS OF MIDDAY MARCH 2, NO FURTHER COMMUNICATION FROM NIEHOUS' ABDUCTORS HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

4. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, ABOUT 100 PEOPLE, SOME 50 IN THE CARACAS AREA, HAVE BEEN DETAINED BY DISIP FOR QUESTIONING IN CONNECTION WITH THE KIDNAPPING. THESE INCLUDE LUIS LANDER, EX-AD POLITICAL LEADER AND EX-DIRECTOR OF THE WORKERS BANK IN THE EARLY 1960'S, AND HIS FOUR SONS. LANDER AND TWO SONS WERE LATER RELEASED BUT EDGARDO LANDER AND HIS BROTHER LUIS ENRIQUE, WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE LEFTIST FALN, REMAINED IN CUSTODY LATE MARCH 1. ARRESTED ALONG WITH EDGARDO LANDER WERE TWO URUGUAYANS UNCLASSIFIED

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AND A COLOMBIAN. A NUMBER OF LEFTISTS HAVE BEEN QUESTIONED BY THE POLICE, INCLUDING THE HEAD OF THE VENEZUELAN COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, JOSE VELASQUEZ. TWO LEFTIST GROUPS, THE MAS PARTY AND REVOLUTIONARY ACTION, HAVE DISAVOWED ANY CONNECTION WITH THE KIDNAPPING.

5. DISIP HAS REPORTEDLY IDENTIFIED FOUR MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WHO PERFORMED THE ABDUCTION. THEY INCLUDE FALN GUERRILLA LEADER

FRANCISCO PRADA BARAZARTE, BANDERA ROJA LEADER JOSE ASDRUBAL GUZMAN, AND TWO OTHERS, FREDDY FIGUEROA ULLOA AND ANGEL SIMON MARQUEZ. PRADA AND GUZMAN BOTH TOOK PART IN THE MASSIVE JAILBREAK FROM SAN CARLOS PRISON IN JANUARY 1975. THE FACT THAT SEVEN PERSONS WERE INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL KIDNAPPING HAS INTERESTED THE POLICE BECAUSE IT IS THE FIRST TIME SO MANY INDIVIDUALS HAVE TAKEN PART IN A POLITICAL KIDNAPPING HERE. MOREOVER, THE NIEHOUS ABDUCTION IS REPORTEDLY THE FIRST TO HAVE OCCURRED AT A VICTIM'S HOME. AUTHORITIES HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT THE DOCUMENTS MAILED FEBRUARY 28 TO EL NACIONAL AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN TYPED BY A PROFESSIONAL SECRETARY IN THAT THE SHEETS CONTAIN STRAIGHT MARGINS AND EMPLOY GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT SPANISH.  
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